



Testimony in Support of SB 753
An Act Concerning the Counting of Incarcerated Persons for the Purpose of Determining
Legislative Districts

Dear Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is William Garcia. I am a resident of New Haven and am testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut SB 753, *An Act Concerning the Counting of Incarcerated Persons for the Purpose of Determining Legislative Districts*.

I voted in New Haven this year. To know that other people are not eligible to vote because they made a mistake in the past discourages me to vote. Voter disenfranchisement on the basis of criminal history is still voter disenfranchisement. I know that if I were to participate in a true democracy, then I would be voting along with my fellow incarcerated citizens of the United States of America. I've had family members that were falsely accused of crimes, and to think that they wouldn't be allowed to vote because of it is outrageous.

Stopping the practice of counting incarcerated people as residents of the districts in which their correctional facilities are located is imperative to increasing the representativeness of Connecticut's General Assembly. The counting of incarcerated persons, the vast majority of whom cannot vote, as members of the legislative districts in which their carceral facilities are located afford inappropriate electoral power to said districts. Moreover, incarcerated persons who can vote must do so in the districts where they lived prior to incarceration. The status quo inaccurately invests legislative authority and exacerbates racial inequities in government, given that Connecticut districts housing correctional facilities have a far higher proportion of white voters than compared to local incarcerated populations.

Connecticut already acknowledges home districts as the political residency of the few incarcerated persons who can vote. CONN. GEN. STAT. §§ 9-14, 9-14a actually *prohibits* these voters from claiming residence for voting purposes in the district in which they are incarcerated. Based on 2010 US Census data, the ideal Senate district size is 99,280 residents.

Senate District 7 contained 102,622 residents as of 2011. When incarcerated persons are counted as residents of their home districts the District 7 population decreases to 94,692. This shows that incarceration inflates the population, and thereby the voting power, of District 7 by 7.73%, diluting the voting power of other districts in the state. For every 85 residents in District 59 (which encompasses Robinson, Enfield, and Willard-Cybulski Correctional Institutes), there are over 100 residents in District 97 (located in New Haven). The vote of a District 97 resident thus counts for less than 85% of the vote of a District 59 resident. Similar imbalances occur in the other gerrymandered districts.

Every Connecticut resident deserves equal representation in the state legislature. I ask the committee to consider passing S.B. 753 to enshrine that same principle in law.

Sincerely,

William Garcia
New Haven, CT